

Circus Ministry Takes on Broader Mission

by Sr. Lorraine Molchanow, MSC

For the last eleven years, Sisters Dorothy Fabritze and Bernard Overkamp have traveled the country ministering to God's People on the Move. They have done so in three different circuses and in a variety of helping capacities with God's blessing and ours. Gratefully, their presence and service have enriched the lives of many.



After eleven years of working and catechizing among the people of the Roberts, Camara and Ringling Brothers & Barnum & Bailey Circuses, Sisters Bernard Overkamp and Dorothy Fabritze will take on a broader ministry as co-directors of SPEC, Show People's Evangelization of Catechists.

One of the blessings of their ministry was the catechetical instruction of the children and the preparation of both children and adults for the sacraments. Several adults have returned to the practice of their Catholic faith or have joined the Church because of the witness of our Sisters.

At the invitation of Father Jerry Hogan, the national circus chaplain, Sisters Dorothy and Bernard were asked to direct SPEC, Show People's Evangelization of Catechists. This dream of Father Jerry's is to provide an opportunity for members of the show communities to become qualified religious educators; that is, to identify, train, and supervise religious educators who travel with the various shows. In dialogue with Sisters Dorothy and Bernard, we gave them our blessing to participate in this new venture.

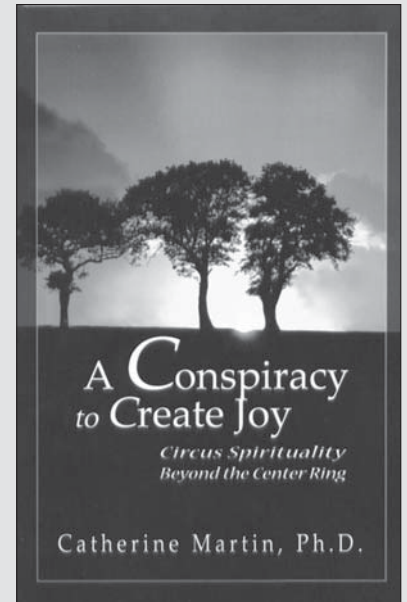
Our Sisters will visit the circuses to identify those who wish to share their faith with others on their show. They would then be involved in training these people on site or online. The challenges of getting SPEC off the ground are many and the personnel are few, but the goal is attainable with the grace of God. Their model in this is none other than Saint Paul himself who established catechetical communities, left them functioning and then returned to see them grow.

Sisters Dorothy and Bernard submitted their resignation to Ringling Brothers Circus as of December 2010. Following months of preparation, the SPEC Program is slated to begin in January 2012. Sisters Dorothy and Bernard ask for your positive energy and prayer so that they may bring parish life to so many whose lifestyles preclude them from it; pray that they may be Heart to all People on the Move so that the Sacred Heart of Jesus may be loved everywhere. †

BOOK NOTES

Do you ever feel your life is like a three-ring circus with many activities claiming your attention at once? You know that MSC Sisters Dorothy Fabritze and Bernard Overkamp have been ministering in the circus for over ten years. Now, Dr. Catherine Martin has written a book not only about real circus life but also about the spiritual approach to life which the circus folks live everyday.

Based on surveys, interviews, and observations, the book, *A Conspiracy to Create Joy: Circus Spirituality Beyond the Center Ring*, reveals the backstage reality of life in the circus. It consists of being constantly on the move, living in close quarters, and working at high pressure jobs in the public eye.



Sisters Bernard and Dorothy introduced Cathy Martin to the hidden spiritual dimension that underlies those busy lives. This deep consciousness of the divine offers insights to those outside the circus who also live in stressful and demanding circumstances.

To read about Sr. Dorothy, Sr. Bernard, and the people of the circus, you can order the book from Linus Publications at linusbooks.com. Circus spirituality is an incarnational spirituality. It acknowledges the divine revealed in the ordinary. It rejoices in everyday reality as a vital connection to the sacred. If this sounds like your kind of spiritual approach to life, you may enjoy reading this book.

PS: If you would like reflection questions to accompany the various chapters of the book, these are available free of charge from the author at cmartin@cse.edu or from Sr. Dorothy or Sr. Bernard.